

THE SACRAMENTO BEE Capitol and California

Building up ballot accounts

In 2000, voters approved a law meant to limit the size of checks California politicians could collect from deep-pocketed interest groups. But a growing number of state leaders are skirting those limits, soliciting contributions for ballot accounts in increments of tens, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Lawmaker	Amount raised	Account name	The skinny
Assemblywoman Karen Bass	\$244,000	Strengthening California Through Leadership	Opened in 2007 to support Proposition 93, the term limits measure. Fundraising has picked up since Bass was selected as the next speaker in late February.
Assemblyman Kevin De Leon	\$100,000	Believing in a Better California	Opened to support Proposition 93. De Leon plans to continue fundraising for the account.
Assemblyman Hector De La Torre	\$0	California Progress	Recently opened, following failed attempt to negotiate eminent domain agreement in 2007. De La Torre created the account without plans for a specific ballot measure.
Sen. Dean Florez	\$219,000	A Clean California	Created to support a Kern County anti-sludge measure in 2006. Inactive since.
Assemblyman John Laird	\$32,250	Monterey Bay and South Bay for Yes on 93	Created to promote Proposition 93. Laird used it to send mail supporting the measure to his constituents.
Assemblyman Tony Mendoza	\$0	One California	Recently opened. Mendoza, a former teacher, said he is considering a future education measure.
Assemblyman Fabian Núñez	\$580	Committee to Protect California's Future	Open since 2005. The speaker has used the account for multiple ballot campaigns.
Sen. Alex Padilla	\$0	California 2020	Recently opened. Padilla said the account will "help educate voters on issues that are important to me and my district."
Sen. Don Perata	\$9.77 million	Leadership California	Open since 2005. Perata has used the account during the infrastructure bond campaign and the health care debate.
Assemblyman Anthony Portantino	\$0	Moving California Forward	Recently opened. Portantino said it "gives me the option to be relevant with large public policy considerations, which is what residents of my district want me to do."
Sen. George Ruker	\$1.1 million	Committee to Take Back our Neighborhoods	Created to back a November 2008 anti-gang initiative.
Assemblyman Todd Spitzer	\$4.8 million	Marsy's Law: Justice for Crime Victims	Created to back a November 2008 initiative on victims' rights. The \$4.8 million came from a single donor, high-tech billionaire Henry Nicholas.
Sen. Tom Torlakson	\$60,700	Invest in California	Inactive since 2006, when Torlakson raised – and spent – funds for package of infrastructure ballot measures.
Sen. Mark Wyland	\$5,000	Control the Border	Opened in 2007, but currently inactive. Wyland launched an anti-illegal immigration Web site, but said he "simply got busy with other things."

Source: Bee research and campaign finance reports

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